FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

25 43

SECURITY : UNCLASSIFIED

PRIORITY: AIR POUCH

OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS MESSAGE CE

EUR INDEX

755.00/5-2650

1950 JUN 5 PM 3 35

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

For Dept. use only.

RECD JUNE 2

ACTION EUR

INFO DCR EUR/X UNA OLI IE USUN E COM ECA LAB S

TO : Department of State

FROM : BRUSSELS 719, May 26, 1950

REF : Amdesp 667, May 16, 1950

SUBJECT : BELGIAN ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN

755.00/5-2650

The Belgian electoral campaign, the third which the Royal Question has brought about in a year, is extremely quiet due to the boredom of the electorate and the poverty of the parties' treasuries. The party platforms (Embassy Despatch No. 667, May 16, 1950) make expansive promises and reaffirm each party's position on the Royal Question. There are few campaign posters and little campaign literature being distributed. It is reported that meetings and rallies draw small and usually apathetic crowds.

It is generally felt that the P.S.C. will get a majority. If this party succeeds in forming a government, it will be the first time in thirty-three years (since 1917) that Belgium has had a one party government. The most debated question is whether this may be a bare majority which would leave the balance of forces stalled near dead center as it has been for almost a year or whether the P.S.C. may obtain a decisive majority which would enable it to form an effective government.

There have been several events during the campaign which have caused discussion in the press. Two of these will be discussed in this Despatch, others will be reported subsequently.

The Socialist-Liberal Cartel

The Socialists and the Liberals have agreed to present a single list of candidates or cartel as it is called in the Provinces of Limbourg and Luxembourg.

Normally each party's candidates are presented on the ballot in a vertical list headed by a number rather than the name of the party. The numbers are as follows: Socialists 1, Communists 2, P.S.C. 3, and Liberals 4. In Limbourg and Luxembourg the cartel will have the number 5. Voters there will thus have three lists: 2 (Communist), 3 (P.S.C.) and 5 (Cartel).

Most of the cartel lists will alternate Socialist and Liberal candidates, the Socialists getting first place on the Chamber List and the Liberals on the Senate List. Precedence

CBW
CBWood:mh
362.21

RMW FEN HH 9/3/50 RM LDML

MAY 195

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY J.L. SMITH DATE NOV 1 7 1982

RDS☐or XDS☐EXT. DATE

ACTION COPY — DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R with an endorsement of action taken.

ENDORSE EXISTING MARKINGS

DECLASSIFIED☐ RELEASABLE☐

RELEASE DENIED☐

PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS

on these lists is important as the Belgian system of proportional representation, and the fact that most Belgians vote the whole list rather than a single name, usually mean that those with top billing have the best chance of election.

The purpose of cartels is to prevent the parties from losing votes. The Electoral Code provides that if a party does not obtain a quorum1/ in at least one of the arrondissements of a province, it will not be represented in that province. All the votes which the party obtained in that province are thus lost to it since they cannot be used in another province.

The Socialists and especially the Liberals are weak in the Provinces of Limbourg and Luxembourg and as separate parties might not get a quorum. They have thus joined forces and may increase their Parliamentary representation from these provinces by three or four seats.

Socialist-Liberal cartels were formed in Limbourg and Luxembourg for the 1946 elections, but not during the 1949 elections. In 1949 the Socialists lost two seats in the Chamber in these provinces and the Liberals one although both polled a higher percentage of the total valid votes than they had in 1946. Leaders of the parties learned the obvious lesson and decided to return to the 1946 formula.

- -

1/ A quorum is two-thirds of the electoral divisor of an arrondissement. The electoral divisor is the total of valid votes cast in the arrondissement divided by the number of seats to which the arrondissement is entitled. Thus in the 1949 elections for the Chamber the total valid votes cast in the arrondissement of Hasselt, Province of Luxembourg, was 105,959. Hasselt has five seats in the Chamber. The electoral divisor for that election was $\frac{105,959}{5}$ or 21,192. This meant that the quorum was 2/3 x 21,192 or 13,984 votes. The Liberals only received 13,513 votes. They likewise obtained less than a quorum in the other arrondissement of the province. As a result 22,228 Liberal voters of Limbourg had no representation in the Chamber. The same system applies to directly elected Senators and to the Provincial Councils.

For a good resumé of the Belgian electoral system see this Embassy's Despatch No. 347 of June 22, 1949.

Thus the arrangement is not new and it is claimed that each candidate will campaign for the platform of his own party. The P.S.C. press, especially the ultra conservative La Libre Belgique have uttered cries of righteous indignation at this collaboration of Socialists and Liberals. Since the P.S.C. itself has recently been in coalition governments with the Socialists (1946-49) and the Liberals (1949-50) this is purely campaign talk.

Acceptance of Concentration Flamand Candidates by the P.S.C.

The P.S.C. is also missing no opportunity of obtaining maximum representation in Parliament. The party has accepted as candidates three members of the Concentration Flamand: Messrs. Verhaege (a doctor from Bruges), Serreyn (from Ypres), and De Witte (a lawyer from Roulers).

The Concentration Flamand or Vlaamse Concentratie is an extreme right wing splinter group accused by the Socialists of being Flemish nationalist, anti-labor and anti-democratic. It is also claimed that they would like to obtain amnesty for as many war-time collaborationists as possible. It is evident that the acceptance of these candidates have supplied the Socialists with some anti-P.S.C. propaganda.

However, the candidates themselves have clear war-time records and have agreed to follow the P.S.C. program as P.S.C. candidates. Despite dark Socialist hints at secret and shameful promises made by the P.S.C. to win them over, it seems unlikely that the P.S.C., which had 105 seats in the last Chamber, has materially changed its program to suit three candidates for this election.

In any event the P.S.C. program is so amorphous and all-embracing that it is difficult to detect a change.

Hugh Millard
Counselor of Embassy

FOREIGN SERVICE OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

SECURITY . UNCLASSIFIED

PRIORITY: AIR POUCH

EUR INDEX

755.00/5-2650

For Dept. use only. June 3

TO : Department of State

FROM : BRUSSELS 710 MAY 26, 1950

REF :

1950 JUN 5 PM 4 04

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

SUBJECT : BELGIAN PRESS, MAY 22 - 24

RECD ACTION: EUR

INFO: FR DC/R EUR/X UNA OLI USUN E H COM ECA LAB ce

Headlines: London Atlantic Conference; Truman Letter to Congress; Coming Belgian Elections

INTERNATIONAL

London Atlantic Conference: Press prints Belga agency message reporting Belgian circles welcome change of attitude in that, while Atlantic countries continue to seek international solution, they have in meantime taken all desirable measures in spirit of realism and cooperation. Brussels Treaty, which has not proved satisfactory, will be more effective when reduced to regional arrangement within framework of Atlantic Pact. According to conservative LA NATION BELGE, new collective military organization may alleviate financial burden but will call for greater renunciation of national habits. Close intermingling of military effort will automatically affect economic and financial fields; military force accruing from Atlantic union is melting pot from which conditions of economic prosperity and political stability, or in other words real peace, will issue. In another article LA NATION BELGE remarks Western statesmen realize at last it is safer and more economical to defend Europe against invasion than to reconquer it bit by bit, and they fortunately have agreed on means of circumventing the danger; if matters have reached present pass, fault lies entirely with USSR. Conservative HET NIEUWSBLAD states two contradictory aims must be reconciled: decent standard of living and sound economy are just as necessary for preservation of Atlantic freedom as effective military defense apparatus. In conservative LA LIBRE BELGIQUE Paul Struye writes bulk of Atlantic nations' work still lies ahead; real test will come with distribution of various defense tasks. London was only starting point, but it was at any rate a good one. Conservative DE NIEUWE GIDS says US opinion on occasion of London conferences has again been able to ascertain West Europe is far from enthusiastic at prospect of receiving stocks of weapons which will partly compromise European recovery by aligning everything on defense which will be of little avail against Russian steamroller.

Schuman Proposal: Financial AGEFI publishes interview with Van Zeeland and conservative LA LIBRE BELGIQUE publishes Van Zeeland's speech welcoming Schuman's proposal to pool French-German coal and steel industries. Van Zeeland stated application of principles on which project is based would improve balance in West Europe, and aim should be to form pool from which each member would derive approximately equal benefits. Private initiative must be respected, program must not give way to masked socialization of industry. Socialist VOORUIT comments France, after having been regarded as second-rate nation for years, has with US approval suddenly resumed lead in Europe; Schuman's plan has met with general approval as it ends Franco-German feud and strengthens West Europe's power. Communist LE DRAPEAU ROUGE warns there

RWKautsky:rwk
3 5 0
MAY 19

755.00/5-2650

HH

RMW FEN QBC R

ACTION COPY — DEPARTMENT OF STATE

The action office must return this permanent record copy to DC/R files with an endorsement of action taken.

would be considerable drop in wages under Schuman plan, and communist DE RODE VAAN says if plan is carried through, it will be important step toward war; working hours will be increased and wages of Belgian metal workers and miners as well as entire laboring class will be reduced to level of German workers' wages.

TRUMAN Letter to Congress: Press headlines Truman's letter to Congress accusing USSR of boycotting UN. Socialist VOLKSGAZET comments every peace policy consists in endeavor to avoid opposition of blocs and asks whether repetition of accusations and reproaches can contribute to clarification of international atmosphere. Conservative DE STANDAARD attacks letter which shows US aim is to make UN instrument of US policy. Truman divides world into two camps; with such view UN might well be abolished since it has lost all meaning as organ of peace. Truman's efforts and Lie's efforts show two opposed conceptions: on one hand peace by subjection of one party to another by threat of overwhelming power; on other hand peace by negotiation and mutual concessions. Both sides appear to be preparing for war rather than negotiating for peace.

European Economic Integration: Conservative LA NATION BELGE welcomes both Schuman plan and proposal to include Canada and US in OEEC as important moves toward international economic cooperation. Coming OEEC meeting will be test of European spirit; if it is successful, it will be thanks to better Atlantic cohesion, US having taken more decisive part than heretofore in European deliberations. According to conservative DE GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN, London circles hope OEEC will agree with European Payment Union project in which Great Britain would be integrated, but believe initiatives should be taken by US or continental countries, not by Britain. Financial AGEFI hopes for big step forward at next OEEC meeting, with cooperation of all countries including Britain.

BELGIUM

Coming Belgian Elections: Financial AGEFI prints statement by Eyskens answering questions asked by paper. Eyskens remarked policy of PSC Ministers in next government would be continuation of policy pursued hitherto: development of free enterprise with complementary intervention of State in interests of nation, social progress and well-being; export trade would be supported and stimulated; Government would continue to back OEEC's aim for general convertibility. Rightist papers publish summary of PSC's electoral program which states PSC desires joint meeting of Parliament to decree end of "impossibility of ruling" and King's restoration and wants majority with which to govern and implement its program so as to contribute to unity of all Belgians around throne in spirit of King's message of April 15. In foreign affairs, Belgium will contribute to international cooperation and will make military and financial effort to defend self and meet obligations within framework of Western cooperation. Program also calls for internal security. Press reports Christian Trade Unions have issued declaration disputing FGTB and Socialist Party's claim to speak in name of working class and setting forth its own social program which must in part be applied in political sphere by candidates enjoying confidence of Christian Workers.

Antwerp Strike: Non-Communist press reports failure of Communist appeal to Antwerp dockers not to report for work May 22 to protest against discharging US weapons; Communist press claims strike was success and that no more than few hundred dockers were at work.

ROBERT MURPHY
American Ambassador

H.M.